

# UNHCR Turkey response during the COVID-19 pandemic

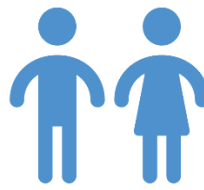
In line with precautionary measures undertaken by the Government of Turkey to contain the spread of the Coronavirus, UNHCR Turkey adjusted its programme and its cooperation with partners, to boost support to refugees. Based on telephone surveys and assessments of needs, UNHCR provided assistance to refugees and host communities across the country working with local and national partners, in particular with public institutions and municipalities. UNHCR's additional support focused on emergency cash assistance, the provision and distribution of hygiene and other needed items, communicating with communities and supporting refugee initiatives. UNHCR also worked closely with its education and livelihoods partners to support mitigating the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students engaged in distance learning and, in general, on refugees who have been hit by the loss of income.

## COVID-19 Emergency Cash Assistance

In close coordination with the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), UNHCR initiated an emergency cash assistance to address the most urgent needs of refugees rendered vulnerable by the impact of COVID-19. The assistance targets vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers who are not benefitting from other assistance programmes with one-time cash support of TYR 1,000 per household, transferred through the Turkish Postal Service (PTT). Implementation started in April 2020.



**12,288**  
households reached  
as of 27 July



**58,809**  
individuals reached  
as of 27 July

## Distribution of hygiene materials

UNHCR works closely with the authorities to provide hygiene kits and other in-kind assistance to both members of refugee and host communities. Items are delivered to local authorities, governorates, municipalities and partners who in turn distribute to the population in need. Personal protective equipment (PPE) was also provided to authorities across the country to ensure their protection while carrying out their duties. Across the country, UNHCR has provided:



Over **65,900 hygiene kits** to refugees and host community in **35 provinces** through **61 partners** including local authorities, municipalities and NGOs



**5,000 PPE**, **38,000 latex gloves** and **6,550 masks** as well as goggles, thermometers and sanitizers to Turkish border authorities at the western borders of Edirne, Çanakkale, Izmir and Muğla



Over **3,600 packs of food, water, blankets and hygiene items** to Turkish border authorities in Izmir and Muğla



**75 wheelchairs** to refugees in **12 provinces** through **13 partners**



Over **125,500 core relief items** and PPEs to the **six temporary accommodation centres** in South East Turkey for refugees residing there

## Refugee initiatives

In the Anatolian region, UNHCR has directly supported **12 initiatives** of refugees to produce soap bars and masks as well as protective shields for their communities. The initiatives have brought together some refugees and Turkish citizens, with the respective necessary precautionary measures, in **10 provinces** to produce items ranging from **700 to 55,000 masks**, and from **2,400 to 3,000 bars of soap**, which were then distributed by **12 partners**. In Hatay, sewing machines procured by UNHCR for a community support project were used to produce over **7,500 masks**. In Istanbul, **45,000 reusable face masks** are manufactured through a textile workshop refurbished by UNHCR. In Hatay and Istanbul, refugee, migrant and Turkish women participate in the production of masks, which will be distributed to refugee and Turkish households.

## Communication with Communities

From the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, UNHCR enhanced its communication with communities. Working closely with the World Health Organisation (WHO), UNHCR's communication platforms became a crucial means of conveying information about COVID-19 as well as precautionary measures, available services, government announcements and advisories, and how to reach out for help. Information was shared in Arabic, Farsi, English and Turkish. A **telephone survey** was conducted in April with close to **1,500 refugees** in **36 provinces** of the Anatolian region to understand how refugees are affected by COVID-19 and coping economically. This, as well as surveys conducted at the interagency level, informed much of UNHCR's reprogramming and initiatives carried out for the COVID-19 response.

### UNHCR Counselling Line

# 76,000

queries approx. answered from  
mid-March to end of July with  
**86% answer rate**

#### Full teleworking mode

since 23 March with 34 operators

#### Resettlement and financial assistance

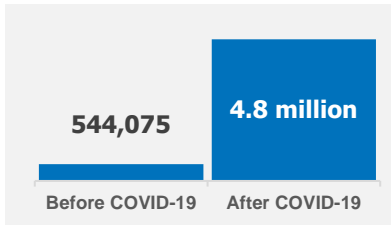
main topics of inquiry

#### Syrian, Afghan, Iranian

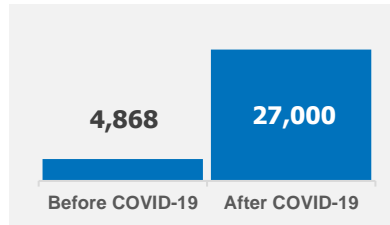
top three nationalities calling the line

### UNHCR Turkey Information Board (Facebook page)

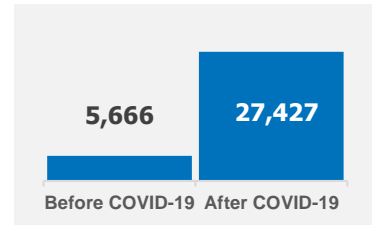
UNHCR published over 200 up-to-date information posts related to services available during COVID-19, curfew announcements and recent regulations in education and livelihood sectors. From mid-March to end of July, compared to a similar 4.5 month period pre-COVID:



**Reach** increased by approx. **800%**



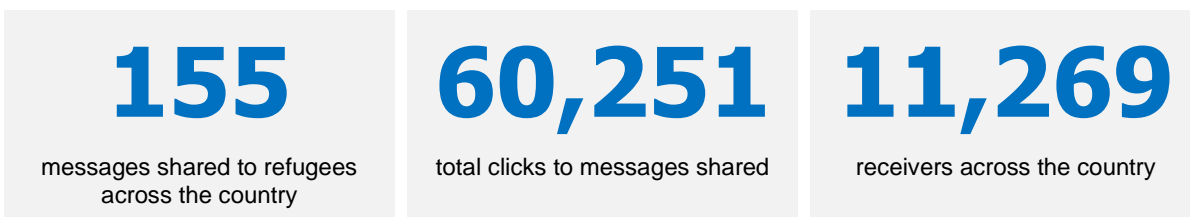
**Followers** increased by approx. 450%



**Likes** increased by approx. 385%

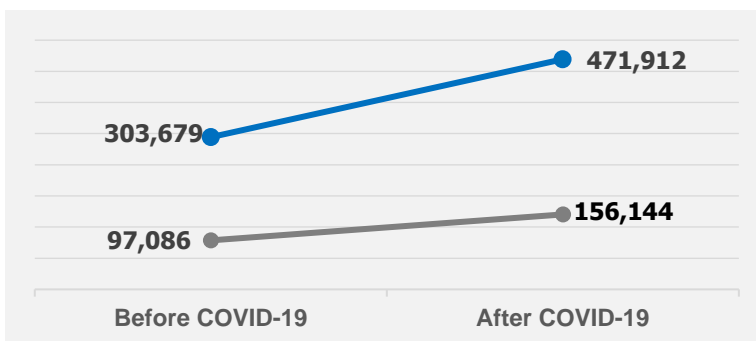
### UNHCR WhatsApp information Tree

The **WhatsApp Communications Tree** was created in March to facilitate rapid and zero-cost information-sharing between UNHCR and refugees through its focal points and partners. From 15 March to 31 July:



### Help Website

**Help** provides information to refugees across a range of themes, from registration and documentation to education and livelihoods, in Arabic, Farsi, English and Turkish. From 15 March to 31 July:



**Users** increased by over 60% compared to similar time period before COVID-19. **Page views** also increased by more than 55%.

### Services Advisor

**Services Advisor** is an inter-agency tool for refugees to search for, and find details of, service providers in their area. During the COVID period, partners updated their services to reflect changing working modalities, allowing for a mapping of services which had been suspended or provided remotely. New services were also added to alleviate the impact of COVID-19 on refugees, including awareness-raising, counselling, psychosocial support and referrals.


**330,000**
**Printed materials**

on COVID-19, produced by UNHCR with the Ministry of Health in Turkish, Arabic and Farsi. Materials were distributed to UNHCR field offices, partners and PDMMs in all **81 provinces**, and to the Ministry of Health.


**62,000**
**Printed materials**

produced by UNHCR with DGMM in Turkish, Arabic and Farsi. Posters showed instructions and measures for refugees to access PDMM premises across **81 provinces**.

## Education

UNHCR also increased its support to **750 scholarship** students through online platforms as well as psychosocial support. Turkish language courses have also been provided in partnership with Turkish authorities. UNHCR developed the “**coaching and mentoring toolkit**” to be used by university advisors as a counselling tool for refugees who are struggling academically or socially.

## Self Reliance


**105**

benefitted from soft skills online training

**86**

refugees attend online vocational courses

**68**

refugees attend online entrepreneurship training

**99**

benefit from online Turkish language courses

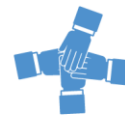
**84**

supported with an internet package

Through its partners, UNHCR provides financial and administrative support to refugees to obtain work permits and open businesses. During the COVID-Period from 15 March to 31 July:

**159 beneficiaries** received work permit fee support, **722 beneficiaries or employers** were provided guidance on business registration and labour market opportunities, and **12 businesses** were registered.


**12**
**Businesses registered**

**722**
**Guidance and information received on business registration**

**159**
**Work permits financial support received**

## External and Donor Relations

Special thanks to donors for their support to UNHCR Turkey and their unrestricted and regional funds in 2020 as of 4 August 2020:

USA | European Union | Japan | France | Norway | Switzerland | Germany | CERF | Slovenia | United Kingdom | Denmark | Canada | Sweden | Finland | Spain | Ireland | Netherlands | Private donors